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A GLOBAL TRANSNATIONAL SUNNI CALIPHATE:

REALISTIC OR UTOPIAN VISION?

by

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14. ABSTRACT

The reestablishment of a global transnational Sunni Caliphate is the stated objective of militant radical Islamic (MRI) groups. They follow a radical ideology borne out of the perceived negative state of Islam in the Middle East in the 20th century. They continue to blame democracy, capitalism, modernity and the move toward secular governments in Muslim lands as the root cause for Islams decline. They believe that a return to the ways of the Rightly Guided Caliphs is the only cure for the ills that plague Muslim society today. Ultimately, they seek a utopian vision where Islam dominates the world and everyone is subject to their radical version of Islam. Despite their grand vision of reestablishing a global transnational Sunni Caliphate it will likely fail. While historically appealing to many Muslims, the Caliphal period was never as puritanical as posited by the MRI groups as power often changed hands through violence and not by the election of believers as mandated by Islam. If such a structure struggle existed in a much less complex world, its not likely to succeed in todays global society. Furthermore, its unlikely the MRI groups can unite their vision and agree on a grand strategy to defeat the current nation-state world order. It seems more likely that the MRI groups are using the cultural Muslim symbol of the historic Islamic Caliphate as a means to rally young Muslims to their cause. The reestablishment of the historic Caliphate is instead a grand vision the MRI groups are using as more of a rhetorical device to recruit, gain sympathy, mobilize followers, and gain legitimacy. Nonetheless, the US must not sit back and presume this will fail, but must engage with a strategy to counter this radical vision. This strategy must be one in which the whole of government is engaged. The US must employ all the elements of its national power (military, intelligence, diplomatic, law enforcement, information, financial, and economic) in an appropriate and fully synchronized manner. Critical to success is for the US to reshape its message that Muslims are not the enemy of the US and that the problems in the Middle East and in the Muslim world writ large, are not entirely the result of US actions and policies alone. The US must stay on the offensive by finding ways to directly appeal to Muslims as well as shaping policy which is less threatening. We must use soft power rather than military force wherever possible. The second aspect is to strengthen states at risk by helping them counter MRI insurgencies and activities wherever they may exist. The predominately Muslim populations in these nations are the dominant terrain that must be won over. The human terrain piece is absolutely the key to success. The whole of government approach is the strategy whereby we leverage everything from economic aid to law enforcement assistance and intelligence, as well as others in order to achieve those quiet successes that will ultimately lead us to long term victory.

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Preface

Lt Col Staha is a Special Tactics Officer currently serving as a National Defense Fellow at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. His experience spans a wide variety of tactical, operational and special operations assignments as well as a functional staff assignment on the Air Staff at the Pentagon. He received his commission through Officer Training School at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, in 1989. He has commanded two Special Tactics Squadrons as well as the 22d Expeditionary Special Tactics Squadron in Iraq in 2007. Lt Col Staha has operational experience in SOUTHCOM, EUCOM, CENTCOM, and PACOM as well as combat tours in Operations URGENT FURY, ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. Lt Col Staha earned a bachelor's degree in Management from Nova University and a master's degree in Professional Leadership from Chapman's University.

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Abstract

The reestablishment of a global transnational Sunni Caliphate is the stated objective of militant radical Islamic (MRI) groups. They follow a radical ideology borne out of the perceived negative state of Islam in the Middle East in the 20th century. They continue to blame democracy, capitalism, modernity and the move toward secular governments in Muslim lands as the root cause for Islam's decline. They believe that a return to the ways of the 'Rightly Guided Caliphs' is the only cure for the ills that plague Muslim society today. Ultimately, they seek a utopian vision where Islam dominates the world and everyone is subject to their radical version of Islam.

Despite their grand vision of reestablishing a global transnational Sunni Caliphate it will likely fail. While historically appealing to many Muslims, the Caliphal period was never as puritanical as posited by the MRI groups as power often changed hands through violence and not by the election of believers as mandated by Islam. If such a structure struggle existed in a much less complex world, it's not likely to succeed in today's global society. Furthermore, it's unlikely the MRI groups can unite their vision and agree on a grand strategy to defeat the current nation-state world order. It seems more likely that the MRI groups are using the cultural Muslim symbol of the historic Islamic Caliphate as a means to rally young Muslims to their cause. The

reestablishment of the historic Caliphate is instead a 'grand vision' the MRI groups are using as more of a rhetorical device to recruit, gain sympathy, mobilize followers, and gain legitimacy.

Nonetheless, the US must not sit back and presume this will fail, but must engage with a strategy to counter this radical vision. This strategy must be one in which the 'whole of government' is engaged. The US must employ all the elements of its national power (military, intelligence, diplomatic, law enforcement, information, financial, and economic) in an appropriate and fully synchronized manner. Critical to success is for the US to reshape its message that Muslims are not the enemy of the US and that the problems in the Middle East and in the Muslim world writ large, are not entirely the result of US actions and policies alone. The US must stay on the offensive by finding ways to directly appeal to Muslims as well as shaping policy which is less threatening. We must use 'soft' power rather than military force wherever possible. The second aspect is to strengthen states at risk by helping them counter MRI insurgencies and activities wherever they may exist. The predominately Muslim populations in these nations are the dominant terrain that must be won over. The human terrain piece is absolutely the key to success. The 'whole of government' approach is the strategy whereby we leverage everything from economic aid to law enforcement assistance and intelligence, as well as others in order to achieve those 'quiet successes' that will ultimately lead us to long term victory.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The events of September 11th, 2001 put Islam front and center in the minds of many Americans. Terms like Islamic fundamentalist, jihadists, and militant Islamists soon became words used in the national vernacular to describe the enemy we now face. In the years that have followed many in the United States sought to learn more about Islam to better understand why Militant Radical Islamists (MRI) use terror attacks to conduct jihad in the name of God to achieve its objectives.[1]

So what does Islam say about war and why do MRI groups use Islam as a basis for attacking its enemies? What motivated the 9/11 terrorists to resort to flying three hijacked civilian airliners into buildings savagely killing nearly 3,000 innocent civilians, save the Pentagon, which could be argued is a military target?

In the years preceding these attacks the United States had been attacked by MRI groups, but most were not operating on our shores, thus it was rarely seen as a real threat. Instead, most terror attacks - except the first World Trade Center attacks in 1993 - were carried out against American embassies in foreign nations, US Naval vessels abroad, military bases in the Middle East and Europe, and even individual citizens working or traveling abroad. While some of these attacks were magnificent in their boldness, they seemingly didn't maintain the attention of most Americans and typically were not viewed as a larger threat to our national security.

Sun Tzu, a classic war theoretician, wrote many centuries ago, "If you do not know your enemies…you will be imperiled in every single battle." Until this fateful day in 2001, the nation did not recognize enemies were at the gate and that every terrorist attack carried out by an Islamic terrorist group was in its essence a battle we lost, and each attack a victory in the eyes of the MRI groups who conducted them, thus emboldening these groups to conduct more attacks.

Since those dark days in September 2001 we have learned much more about our enemy. The American government, the US military, and even academia have established numerous counter- terrorist centers, think tanks, and organizations across the nation to study the problem of radical Islam. There is now a plethora of books, articles, and web sites that inform us of the many radical ideologies within Islam and what some of their objectives are.

One consistent theme of which many Americans are not likely aware is the common goal across the MRI groups to establish a global Sunni Caliphate. The Caliphate is the historic Islamic form of government that dates back to 632 AD when the first Khalifa (or Caliph), Abu Bakr, succeeded the Prophet Muhammad as the leader of the Muslim community.[2] For some Muslims the establishment of the Caliphate ruled by Islamic law (Sharia law) is viewed as the solution for the problems of the umma (or Community of Believers). These groups postulate that Pan-Arabism, Western democracy, communism, capitalism, globalization, and modernity have all corrupted Islam and led Muslims astray and away from the foundational principles of Islam. The MRI groups believe nothing less than the defeat of the infidel governments and the reestablishment of the Caliphate as acceptable to them.

This paper will examine the history of the Caliphate and why MRI groups' radical vision of reestablishing a transnational global caliphate is likely to fail. Some likely reasons it will fail include nationalistic Muslim movements in many parts of the world that reject a transnational

Muslim government. Additionally, with a worldwide Muslim population of an estimated 1.3 billion located in numerous countries across the globe, it seems unlikely a worldwide Muslim consensus could emerge to support such a monolithic government. Furthermore, the many different ethnic, tribal, and nationalistic traditions and cultures that exist in the diaspora makes it highly unlikely most would agree to subject themselves to a single Caliphal authority in a far off land who doesn't have regional knowledge of their specific nation.

Chapter 2 will explore the religious basis for the Caliphate as well as outline the nearly 1400 year history of the Caliphal period to include the Rashidun Caliphs, the Dynastic Caliphs, and some of the lesser Caliphs that followed.[3] This historical narrative points to why a modern Caliphate will not work today, just as it didn't work during the Caliphal era itself. Chapter 3 will first examine some of the influential writers and the ideology they espouse and how it has influenced today's MRI movements and their objectives. They seemingly all seek to defeat the United States in the Middle East, force it to withdraw, to overthrow what Islamists often refer to as "apostate" infidel Arab governments, and replace them with a transnational Caliphate that has global reach and authority recognized by all Sunni Muslims.[4]   The final chapter will examine US Counter-Caliphate strategies and recommendations to defeat the MRI group objective of reestablishing a transnational global Caliphate.

Notes

[1] This author will use the term MRI to generally describe the above terms.

[2] Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliphate, (accessed on January 18, 2009)

[3] Jay Tolson, "Caliph Wanted: Why An old Islamic institution resonates with many Muslims today," Caliphate Online, January 2, 2008http://www.caliphate.eu/2008/01/caliph-wanted.html, (accessed on January 18, 2009).

[4] Stout, Huckabey, Schindler, & Lacey, "The Terrorist Perspectives Project: Strategic and Operational Views of Al Qaida and Associated Movements," (Naval Institute Press), p. 2.

Chapter 2

Caliphal Historical Framework

Early Muslim leaders, through their association with the Prophet Muhammad and observation of his words and deeds as well as guidance provided in the Quran, determined Islam to be more than just a guide on how to personally worship Allah and to live a moral life; it was also a movement intended to establish a new community bound by Islam.[1] In his book, *"Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age"* Stephen Humphrey states: "Islam was a call to build a new community based on God's commandments and dedicated to spreading His religion to all humankind…thus Islam, in brief, had a political mission, and political action was an essential element in personal salvation."[2]

It is with this backdrop, that the immediate followers of the Prophet Muhammad sought to maintain and build upon the political structure the Prophet initiated by having a single political leader with broad authority over the Community of Believers.[3] The first of these early leaders was called *amir-al-mu minin* or "commander of the believers" but sometime later was changed to *khalifa* or Caliph which was the Quranic term for the leader of the Community of Believers.[4]

The historical caliphate began with the appointment of the first Caliph, abu-Bakr, in 632 AD and lasting in some form until 1924. The power, the glory, and proud tradition of the Islamic Caliphate, which ruled the Muslim empire for nearly 1400 years, are burned into the collective Muslim cultural memory.[5] Therefore it's not surprising that the Caliphal period would be viewed as the glorious past when Islam was militarily dominant, society was guided by the

principles of Islam, and led by revered pious Islamic rulers.   Thus it seems quite natural that a society in crisis, whose voices, whether radical or non-violent, would espouse a return to their historical fundamental form of government as the solution to the problems that plague Muslim society today.

Religious Basis

The Quran, the "recitation" given to the Prophet Muhammad, is believed by Muslims as the inerrant, complete word of God.[6] Like Christianity and Judaism, Muslim theology is monotheistic--in that they believe there is only one God--and that the scriptures are the literal word of God to mankind. The revelations of Muhammad contained in the Quran point to God's authority, divinity, sovereignty and power, and are the completion of the Bible and Torah. The Quran is God's divine word to man on how to conduct himself in this life in order to attain salvation in the next life. The Quran provides instructions on how a Muslim is to conduct himself in his daily affairs, the importance of the Community of Believers, and in matters of law such as marriage, divorce, or inheritance, and even how to divide the spoils of war.[7]

Fundamental to the Caliphal construct is the concept of the 'Community of Believers' Today, as in the early beginnings of Islam, Muslims identify themselves as part of a larger 'worldwide Community of Believers' or ummah as referenced in Quran 2:143 in which the ummah is a body of witnesses.[8] As renowned author, John Esposito, states in his book *What Everyone Needs To Know About Islam,* "…the primary identity of a Muslim is as a Muslim, rather than as a member of a tribe, ethnicity, or gender."[9] This concept suggests a religious subordination of tribe, clan, ethnicity, or nationality, thereby placing Islam and protection of the larger Community of Believers above all else which, ideally, would create a single monolithic Muslim polity.

The first major test for the Community of Believers came in 632 AD when the Prophet Muhammad died. With no specific heir identified by Muhammad the Community of Believers sought to maintain the political authority of the Prophet Muhammad and to continue the expansion of Islam. His immediate followers continued with the concept of "a single commonwealth of those who accepted Islam, unified and governed under the broad authority of one man", Muhammad's successor.[10] According to Sunni Muslim tradition, the Caliph is elected by the ummah or their representatives and as such he is the head of state and successor or vicegerent to the political authority of the Prophet Muhammad himself. Principally, the Caliph then is the political leader of the larger Muslim Community of Believers.[11] Sunni Muslim proponents for the reestablishment of the Sunni Caliphate view the Caliph as the global or world leader of all Muslims.[12] Cited below is the reference in the Quran most often cited as the authority for the establishment of the office of a Caliph, the 'Istikhlaf Verse'.

> *"Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors (Khalifas) in the earth, as He made Successors (Khalifas) from among those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely give them in exchange security and peace after their fear: They will worship Me, and they will not associate anything with Me. Then who so is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious."*

> *--Quran [24:55] (Surah Al-Nur, Verse 55)*

Despite just a few caliphal references in the Quran, there are other sources recognized as authorities to answer questions on Islamic government or other matters within Islam. These sources include the Hadith, the Sahaba of Muhammad, and the respected written opinions of historic Islamic scholars. The Hadith is the transliterated spoken words of the prophet and his actions.[13] The Prophet's words were orally transmitted for more than a hundred years before Islamic historians in the 8th and 9th centuries began documenting the words and actions of the Prophet.[14] The Hadith and the Quran are viewed as sacred texts from which theology, religious

practice, and Shari'a are derived. Faithful Muslims use both texts to study Muhammad's Sunnah—or words and deeds. The Sahaba were the Prophet Muhammad's immediate advisors who supported him and whose narration of his life and deeds are often cited in the Hadith. Abu Bakr and Ali, two of the 'Rightly Guided' Caliph's were members of the Sahaba. Following the death of the prophet Muhammad, abu Bakr reportedly stated: "It is forbidden for Muslims to have two Amirs (rulers)..."[15] He went on to say on the day of Al-Saqifa:

> *"It is forbidden for Muslims to have two Amirs for this would cause differences in their affairs and concepts, their unity would be divided and disputes would break out amongst them. The Sunnah would then be abandoned, the bid'a (innovations) would spread and Fitna would grow, and that is in no one's interests."*[16]

The Hadith also contain references to the Caliphal office which seem to substantiate the 'Istikhlaf Verse'.

> *"Hadhrat Huzaifa narrated that the Messenger of Allah said: Prophethood will remain among you as long as Allah wills. Then Caliphate (Khilafat) on the lines of Prophethood shall commence, and remain as long as Allah wills. Then corrupt/erosive monarchy would take place, and it will remain as long as Allah wills. After that, despotic kingship would emerge, and it will remain as long as Allah wills. Then, the Caliphate (Khilafat) shall come once again based on the precept of prophethood"*[17]

--Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal

It's with these Islamic doctrinal principles that militant radical Islamist groups and other Sunni organizations argue for the reestablishment of the transnational global Caliphate. A return to the fundamental Islamic governance mandated in the Quran - and other sacred texts - are seen as the solution for Muslims around the world. How plausible such a realization might be has yet to be seen; but it seems highly unlikely in a much more complex world order than what existed during the early days of Islam that a global Sunni caliphate could emerge.

The Rashidun Caliphs (The Rightly Guided Caliph's) 632-661 AD

The 30 year period that followed the death of the Prophet Muhammad was a time of great Islamic expansion of both territory and converts to Islam. This expansion was led by the Rashidun Caliphs - men who were companions and friends of the Prophet Muhammad and who are historically viewed as pious leaders who were elected by common consent of the Community of Believers.[18] The first of these was abu Bakr who was the Prophet's father-in-law and close confidant.[19] He oversaw the expansion of the empire during the Ridda wars when the empire solidified control of the Arabian Peninsula which set the stage for additional conquests in the decades that followed.[20]

In 634, abu Bakr, on his deathbed, nominated his successor, Umar (Umar ibn al-Khattab), who was elected by the Community of Believers.[21] After his assassination by a slave, Umar was succeeded by Uthman (Uthman ibn Affan) who was elected by the Majlis or council of electors.[22] Uthman was soon viewed as too powerful and, acting more as a monarch than as an elected representative, he soon found himself opposed by many of the umma. His enemies accused him of diverting money from the treasury for his own gain, making family appointments to key positions, and other indiscretions.[23] His unpopularity and nepotism was his undoing; he was murdered in 656. His actions and his death sparked the first "Fitna" or "temptation or trial", a Civil War which lasted five years.[24] In this tribulation, Ali (Ali ibn Abi Talib), the cousin and son in law of the Prophet Muhammad, ascended to the office of Caliph.[25] Ali's ascension to the office was opposed by large segments of the Community of Believers. The opposition that swirled around Ali as Caliph, plus the on-going civil war, led to the major schism in Islam between Shia and Sunni Muslims that reverberates to this day.[26] The first Muslim civil war and the Rashidun Caliphal period ended with the assassination of Ali by an allied group called the

Kharijites in 661.[27] The proud history of Islamic tradition refers to this era of leaders as "The Rightly Guided" Caliphs, yet many questions as to how to properly elect and seat someone to the office of caliph remained problematic.

Caliphal Dynasties

In the centuries that followed, the political leadership of the Islamic community passed, not by election as previously prescribed, but rather became more of a monarchy in that the office of Caliph stayed within certain families or clans. Imperial power was maintained or gained through the use of internal powers such as the military and external support from allied governors and associations.[28] This change from those elected to the practice of monarchial heir did little to solve the lingering question of how or whom should be seated as Caliph, ultimately leading to yet another civil war just 20 years later.

Umayyad's 661-750

The Umayyad Caliphs ruled the empire from Damascus, Syria, from 661 to 750 and saw at least 12 different caliphs and several others who laid claim to the seat of power.[29] The Umayyad's dynasty oversaw great geographical expansion across three continents, including North Africa, Europe, Hispania, Persia and Asia, greatly extending the Islamic Empire and seeing many new converts.[30] Despite this success, the Umayyad's were not universally accepted by the Community of Believers as the legitimate political authority. As a result there was much unrest, confrontation, and challenges to the Umayyad's Caliphal authority, which led to a second Fitna (or civil war) which lasted from 680-692; still the Umayyad's managed to maintain power for nearly 70 more years.[31]

Abbasid's 750-1258

In 750 the Abbasid Dynasty under the guise of "the family of Muhammad" laid claim to the Caliph by decisively defeating Umayyad armies in Iraq and Iran.[32] Acting without hesitation, they quickly put to sword the last Umayyad Caliph and many of the Umayyad princes thereby eliminating any other claimants to the office.[33] The Abbasids consolidated their power over the next few years and even moved the capital of the empire from Damascus to Baghdad.

Like the Umayyads before them, the Abbasids faced many challengers to the office. First among them were the Shiite's (or Alids, as they were called then) who initially were allied with the Abbasids in their bid to overthrow the Umayyads. The Alids or Shiite's believed the Caliph should be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, or at least from the Prophet's tribe, the Hashims.[34] With this view they often made attempts at the office; all were defeated. Again, like their predecessors, succession proved difficult at the death of a Caliph because there wasn't a tradition or practice of how this was to be accomplished. In this turmoil brothers, cousins, and other family members often laid claim to the office and often leading to bloodshed.[35]

Nonetheless, the Abbasids dynasty proved to be a period of great Islamic expansion and was the zenith of the Muslim empire. In part, this was made possible by the development of a professional military that took form in the ninth century under Caliph al-Mutasim and continued with later Caliphs.[36] Instead of loose affiliations based on clan, family, and loose federations, the Abbasid's created an army of full-time professional soldiers called ghulams.[37] These highly trained soldiers lived and worked in small units whose ties to tribe and clan became less important than their bond and allegiance to the Caliph. In fact commanders, instead of the Caliph's family or clan, were often assigned to provisional governorships in important regions

presumably to provide security and oversee the interests of the empire by projecting the Caliph's authority.[38]

By the mid to late tenth century the Abbasids' power and influence over the Muslim empire began to wane. Internal frictions in Baghdad and reduced revenues weakened the Abbasids' ability to influence affairs outside their immediate control, primarily Iraq.[39] Instead, regional governors, Emirs, and Sultans exercised local authority over their domain, ultimately decreasing the power and influence of the central authority in Baghdad.[40] Despite this, the dynasty didn't completely fall until the Mongols swept through Baghdad and killed the Caliph and occupied Baghdad in 1258.[41]

Lesser Caliphates 13th to 20th Century

The demise of the Abbasids ended the larger Muslim empire and the unity of the polity it purported to represent. Yet, symbolically, many Muslim rulers from the Mamelukes to the Ottoman Turks and others in India and North Africa claimed title of Caliph; none ever had the wider acceptance by the Community of Believers as their predecessors did.

First among these lesser Caliphs were the Mameluke Turks. After defeating the Mongols in 1260, the Mamelukes succeeded in protecting the new center of the Muslim empire at Cairo, Egypt. [42] In so doing, they followed the previously established tradition of establishing a Caliph for the Muslim empire. But the duties of the Caliph were symbolic and were "primarily restricted to ceremonial and religious matters"; real power remained with the military leaders.[43] Next in line were the Ottoman Turks who defeated the Mamelukes in 1517 beginning a nearly 400 year reign of Arab lands by the Ottomans.[44]

While Ottoman rulers most often used the title of Sultan, they clearly understood the symbolic importance of the title of Caliph to the Arab lands they conquered; thus, they invoked

the title of Caliph when it suited them and to legitimize their position as ruler.[45] In an effort to strengthen his position and conquest of Arab lands, Selim I went a step further and was the first Ottoman Sultan who laid full claim to the title of Caliph and the authority that it represented.[46] This mostly traditional and symbolic practice continued intact until the Republic of Turkey's first President, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, abolished the use of the title of Caliph in 1924, when what remained of the Ottoman Empire became known as the secular state of Turkey.[47]

Summary

From its nascent beginnings in 610, when the Prophet Muhammad began receiving the recitation, Islam rapidly grew in its acceptance and dominance. One crucial component that made this rapid growth possible was the concept of the Community of Believers in which Islam was ceded as preeminent to tribe, family, or clan, a concept completely alien at the time. Thus, the office of "Commander of Believers", or Caliph, became the critically important symbol of political and religious authority in the Muslim community. The power rested with the Caliph and was won by election of the Community of Believers or its representatives. Yet, like most human endeavors, no matter how principled or pious an approach devised, this vision of the Community of Believers single-mindedness in selecting a new leader rarely passed from one ruler to the next without bloodshed.

Despite the difficulties and in-fighting over who and how a Caliph should be elected or appointed… even the ascension by an heir… Islam saw great conquest and riches as it grew into a militarily dominant power in its own right. At its zenith in the 9th century the Muslim empire dominated large parts of three continents. In total there was an unbroken string of Caliphs from 632 until 1258, while other lesser caliphates existed until 1924. This proud period of Islamic

history is clearly burned into the cultural memory of most Muslims and is looked upon as a glorious past and one to which some wish to return.

Nonetheless, such a radical vision for the future and its prospect of coming into being seems highly unlikely when one examines the current nation-state world order construct. Therefore, the birth of a transnational Sunni Caliphate would require at least one predominantly Sunni nation's government to either accede to an elected Caliph and step aside, or for the existing government and it's military to be defeated outright. If somehow achieved, such success must be immediately exploited and the movement must expand outward from there.

Crucial to this success is the support of multiple Sunni Muslim populations who would embrace the Caliphal form of government. Such a possibility is difficult to imagine and it seems extremely unlikely that any targeted government would willingly give up power without a tremendous fight. Furthermore, any government facing such a challenge would, no doubt, reach out to its aligned regional and international partners to counter the Caliphal movement in that region, decreasing the chances that a caliphate movement would have the strength to win.

In 2007 Wilton Park, an international organization based out of the United Kingdom, held an international conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, to discuss the current Caliphate revivalist movement and issues surrounding the debate of this topic in the Muslim world and if there is a unified front for such a transnational Caliphate.[48] An observer attending the conference for Wilton Park observed a building consensus among the attendees that "history will not repeat itself: it is not possible to bring back a system that existed for just a few decades 15 centuries ago."[49] The final conclusion in the report is that, "The vast majority of people do not seriously entertain the notion of bringing back the caliphate…This seems true across the spectrum of

Islamic voices…rather, it seems to be primarily extremist groups that are advocating the re-establishment of the Caliphate."[50]

Like any movement or mobilization for a particular cause or war, there needs to be a rallying cry; a message that inspires and motivate people to rally to the cause. In the case of radical Islam; they seek to capitalize on the concept of the Community of Believers as a world body of unified Muslims to carry the fight to the enemy. The historic Caliphate is a cultural memory that MRI groups seek to leverage using the glorious past as a grand vision for the future. In fact, some consensus at the 2007 Jakarta conference revealed that some "think that the notion of brining back the Caliphate is a rhetorical device used to recruit, gain sympathy, mobilize followers, irk enemies, and to gain legitimacy."[51]   Hence the transnational Caliphate revivalist movement, although grand, is essentially an attempt to build religious fervor. In its essence the call for jihad and the reestablishment of the historical Caliphate appears to be an emotional appeal or recruiting slogan which stands little chance of ever becoming a reality for MRI groups. The return of the Caliphate is truly a utopian vision that has little chance for success.

Notes

[1] Stephen R. Humphrey's, *"Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age",* (University of California Press) p. 154-155.
[2] Ibid, p.155.
[3] Ibid, p.155.
[4] Ibid, p. 155.
[5] Jay Tolson, "Caliph Wanted: Why An old Islamic institution resonates with many Muslims today," Caliphate Online, January 2, 2008,
[6] Lewis M. Hopfe, "*Religions of the World*", (Glencoe Press), p. 269, 273
[7] Stephen R. Humphrey's, *"Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age",* (University of California Press) p. 149-50.
[8] John L. Esposito, "*What Everyone Needs To Know About Islam",* (Oxford University Press), p. 15.
[9] Ibid., p.15.
[10] Stephen R. Humphrey's, "*Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age",* (University of California Press) p. 155.
[11] Gale Thompson, "*Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*," p. 116.

Notes

[12] Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliphate, (accessed on January 21, 2009)

[13] Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith, (accessed on January 28, 2009)

[14] Ibid.

[15] Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliphate, (accessed on January 21, 2009)

[16] Ibid.

[17] Hadith 17680, Book 4

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[29] Ibid, p.224.

[30] Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliphate, (accessed on January 21, 2009)

[31] Ibid, p.16.

[32] John L. Esposito, "The *Oxford History of Islam*", (Oxford Press), p. 25

[33] Ibid, p. 24-25

[34] The conflict between the Shi'a belief and requirement for the Caliph to be a descendant of the Prophet is another reason a truly unified global caliphate is very unlikely to reemerge.

[35] Ibid, p. 27.

[36] Ibid, p-28

[37] Ibid, p. 28.

[38] Ibid, p-28.

[39] Ibid, p. 30-31.

[40] Lewis M. Hopfe, "*Religions of the World*", (Glencoe Press), p. 286.

[41] Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliphate, (accessed on January 21, 2009)

[42] John L. Esposito, "The *Oxford History of Islam*", (Oxford Press), p. 58-59.

[43] Lewis M. Hopfe, "Relig*ions of the World*", (Glencoe Press), p. 286.

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Chapter 3

Militant Radical Islam

"Idealistically, they're striving to create or to return to the ultimate Islamic caliphate, where borders dissolve and nation-states cease to exist, and it's one great Muslim world stretching from Spain through North Africa, the Middle East, all the way down to Indonesia and into parts of Asia. It's ruled by the caliph, and it's lived according to Shari'a principles"[1]

--Michael Ware, "Inside the Insurgency"

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War 1 resulted in the sub-division of the former empire's possessions among the British and French colonial powers. Arab Muslims (those Muslims from Arab Middle East nations where the Islamic caliphate once existed), found themselves subjected to new forms of governance that were alien to them. These governments didn't necessarily foster or encourage Islamic culture or Shari'a law and in most cases were secular governments modeled after the colonial powers. This, along with the ever increasing disparity between Muslim's apparent decreasing wealth and prosperity compared to the ever increasing affluence of dominant Western powers in their homelands began to foment an Islamic resurgence movement which began in the 1920s.[2] At the same time, Muslim populations exploded, creating high unemployment and leaving many disaffected young men out of work.[3] Today, large Muslim populations in the Middle East and in many nations across the globe suffer under poor governance, are denied basic economic opportunities, and typically lack the political voice to have their grievances heard or addressed.[4]

Add to this the on-going Global War on Terror, seemingly targeted at Muslim organizations and nations, the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and it's

easy to see that many Muslims may feel themselves assailed at every corner by the West and by the United States in particular. MRI groups have capitalized on the aforementioned problems as well as US indiscretions and missteps like Abu Ghraib to further foment hatred toward America. Further, as amorphous networks, MRI's have capitalized on technology such as the internet to communicate, to plan, to recruit, and to call for a global jihad against the "Great Satan", the United States and her allies. MRI groups, bin Laden and al Qaeda in particular, have successfully used the internet and Arab news agencies, such as Al Jazeera, as well as Western media to conduct a highly effective information operations campaign aimed at the Muslim world.

The aforementioned circumstances have led to an ever present and growing political and social crisis in the larger global Muslim community, resulting in the welling up of MRI groups, as well as non-violent Islamic organizations calling for a return to the historical Caliphal framework and a society governed by Islamic law (Shari'a law) as the only solution for the Muslim world's problems. These groups increasingly use the proud era of Islamic history to paint a picture of a seemingly utopian "golden era" that all Muslims should again pursue as their rightful heritage.

Influential Islamist

As has been the case since its inception, Islam has been "intimately intertwined with politics, law, and society" and, as such, many Islamists posit the caliphate as the only acceptable societal structure for the Muslim Community of Believers from its earliest beginnings even unto today.[5] Renowned Islamic scholar, John Esposito, comments that this imprinting is foundational to Muslim society in that "Muslim understanding is based upon the Quran and this early glorious history."[6] So it is that the perceived negative influences of colonial Western culture and the antithetical secular governmental construct imposed on Islamic lands during the eighteenth to

early to mid-twentieth century spawned a number of Islamist authors who used the perceived downtrodden state of the once proud Muslim society to begin to foment dissent and to begin a Muslim awakening or resurgence.[7] The vision of religious piety, religious fervor, and a political call to action in the name of Islam was a cultural narrative many Muslims could easily identify; with some viewing it as the only solution to the problems facing Muslim society. Among these venerated Islamic fundamental idealists and authors were Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Abul-A'ala Mawdudi, whose writings form the basis of today's radical Islamist ideology and their associated Islamic resurgence movements whose ultimate aim is the reestablishment of a transnational global caliphate.

Hasan al-Banna

One of the 20th century's earliest Islamic revivalist movement idealists was Hasan al-Banna, a school teacher who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928. When al-Banna was 16 he left his religiously conservative family and community to enter Dar al-Ulum College in Cairo.[8] While in Cairo, he became disturbed by what he observed as the decline of Islam in the Community of Believers, the negative influences of Westernization, and a move toward secularism in government.[9] As a pious Muslim, Egypt's societal shift toward secularism along with the abolishment of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924 must certainly have shaken al-Banna.

Moved to action, he rapidly built the Brotherhood into a powerful social and political machine by adroitly using mass communication to help the organization expand to every province in Egypt by the early 1930's.[10] His message was clear: Muslim society must adhere to Islam, the Quran, and Sharia law, and as such all Muslims have a mandate - even an obligation - to labor for the return to the Caliphate; jihad is an individual responsibility, and non-Islamic

governments are the enemy and must be defeated.[11],[12] Like his fellow radical Islamists of today, he, too, conspicuously held a totalitarian world view when he stated, "It is the nature of Islam to dominate, not to be dominated to impose its laws on all nations and to extend its power to the entire planet."[13] The Muslim Brotherhood's motto says much about its ideology of Islam as both religion and body politic. "God is our goal, the Quran is our Constitution, the Prophet is our leader, struggle [jihad] is our way, and death in the service of God is the loftiest of our wishes. God is great, God is great."[14]

Al-Banna's vision and influence cannot be overstated; the nascent organization he founded in 1928 is today the world's largest Muslim organization with chapters in as many as 70 nations, including the United States.[15] Commenting on the ubiquitous reach and impact of the Brotherhood on today's radical Islamist groups, Richard Clarke, the former counterterrorism advisor and member of the National Security Council to both Presidents Clinton and Bush testifying before the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on October 22, 2003, stated, "The common link here is the extremist Muslim Brotherhood – all of these organizations are descendants of the membership and ideology of the Muslim Brothers."[16]

Abul A'ala Mawdudi

No review of the modern Islamic resurgence movement would be complete without an examination of Abul A'ala Mawdudi, an Indian Muslim who was instrumental in the establishment of Pakistan as an Islamic state in the mid 1940's. His body of work which began in the early 1930s continues to influence Islamic resurgent groups (both radical and non-violent) around the world. So much is his influence that prolific author and Middle Eastern expert, John Esposito, said Mawdudi's "writings give strong expression to the themes basic to present-day Islamic resurgence."[17]

Mawdudi began his career as a journalist on the Indian subcontinent in the early 1920's, and by the 1930's he was heavily engaged in an Islamic resurgence effort in his homeland.[18] At the time India was undergoing tremendous political changes as independence from Great Britain seemed a real possibility.[19] It was clear that when independence did come, the Indian National Congress with the Hindu majority would rule and establish a Western style secular democracy, which Mawdudi opposed.[20] He argued that Indian Muslims' common history, culture, and distinctive devotion to follow God meant they could not support the nationalist Indian movement in which the Muslim minority would be subjected to the laws and decisions of the majority.[21] Mawdudi's views on nationalism are clear: "Islam is the polar opposite of nationalism and all that nationalism stands for."[22] A staunch anti-nationalist, Mawdudi held a monolithic view of Islam as the answer to humankind's social problems. He believed that "the ultimate goal of Islam is a world-state in which the chains of racial and national prejudices would be dismantled and all mankind incorporated in a cultural and political system, with equal rights and equal opportunities for all…"[23]

In 1933, Mawdudi became the editor of the *Tarjuman al-Quran* [Exegesis of the Quran] journal; a publication he used to target the educated Indian elite in an effort to have Muslim principles presented in a systematic and principled way.[24] He went further in 1941 by establishing Jamaat-i-Islami [The Islamic Association], a political organization dedicated to the cause of the reestablishment of the Islamic state.[25] While initially opposed to the partitioning of India, which would create Pakistan as an independent state, Mawdudi and his Jamaat organization shifted their support for its establishment and were well postured to influence the political process.[26] Not surprisingly, the partitioning of India in 1947 was a very tumultuous time for millions of displaced Muslims as they moved to the new Pakistani state. The suffering,

death, and the mass economic loss created by the mass resettlement of millions of Muslims was enormous and is viewed by some as one of the worst humanitarian disasters of the 20th century.[27]

With the establishment of Pakistan as an independent state, Mawdudi was well postured both politically and organizationally to influence the shaping of the new government which he fiercely argued must be an Islamic state. He rightly believed the prevailing attitude among the polity, as well as the *ulema* (Islamic religious leadership), was a strong bent toward the creation of an Islamic state.[28] His influence in the process was clear when in 1949 the Pakistani Constituent Assembly passed the *Objective Resolution.* The resolution made Pakistan an Islamic state in name only since it lacked provisions for the implementation of *Shari'a* law.[29] Despite this obvious exclusion, Mawdudi signed onto the *Objective Resolution*, viewed by many as a compromise that properly balanced the common ground between the modernist and conservative Islamist.[30]

Mawdudi's broad appeal among radical Islamists was his view on the Islamic state and how it focuses on the sovereignty of God as opposed to Western forms of government which he said were antithetical to Islam. He states, "Islam…is the very antithesis of secular Western democracy…which is the sovereignty of the people."[31] Mawdudi is clear in his thought - sovereignty belongs only to God which is reflected in his criteria for the Islamic state:

> 1) No person, class or group, not even the entire population of the state as a whole, can lay claim to sovereignty. God alone is the real sovereign; all others are merely His subjects.
> 2) God is the real law-giver and the authority of absolute legislation vests in Him. The believers cannot resort to totally independent legislation nor can they modify any law which God has laid down, even if the desire to effect such legislation or change in Divine laws is unanimous.
> 3) An Islamic state must, in all respects, be founded upon the law laid down by God through his Prophet…[32]

According to Mawdudi, "Islam has no trace of Western democracy…and repudiates the philosophy of popular sovereignty and rears its polity on the foundations of the sovereignty of God and the vicegerency of the *khilafa* of man."[33] Mawdudi's view of the Islamic state in its purest form is one in which personal freedoms are considerably restricted. He said, "A state of this sort cannot, evidently, restrict the scope of its activities… Its approach is universal and all-embracing… it seeks to mould every aspect of life and activity in consonance with its moral norms and program of social reform. In such a state no one can regard any field of his affairs as personal and private."[34] Recognizing the apparent confliction with a similarly described totalitarian system, Mawdudi acknowledges that the Islamic state he proposes resembles a communist or fascist state minus the dictator.[35] Therefore it's clear why Mawdudi's vision would appeal to MRI groups as they seek to overthrow and replace "apostate" governments in their region and replace it with a totalitarian government they presume to call an Islamic state guided by *Shari'a* law.

Sayyid Qutb

Another vitriolic voice from Egypt and a member of the Muslim Brotherhood is Sayyid Qutb. Like Hasan al-Banna, he ardently railed against the negative influences of Western society on Muslim traditional societal structure and was prolific in his writings espousing Islam as the solution for the world and society writ large.[36] It's worth noting here that Qutb's virulent views of the West were further reinforced by his first hand observation of Western society during a two year program of study and work in the United States. In the late 1940's and early 1950's Qutb studied at several different schools including the Wilson Teachers' College, in Washington, D.C., Teachers' College at the University of Northern Colorado, and even Stanford University in California.[37]

It was after his return in 1951 that he joined the Muslim Brotherhood and quickly rose through the ranks, ultimately becoming the Editor and Chief of the organization's weekly newspaper; *The Al-Ikwan al-Muslimin.*[38] In 1954, the Muslim Brotherhood was banned in Egypt after one of its members tried to assassinate President Nasser.[39] Viewed as a danger to the regime, many Brotherhood members were rounded up including Qutb, who was eventually convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison.[40] It was in prison from 1954 to 1964 that he completed a number of significant works including an exhaustive 30 volume commentary of the Quran, *In the Shades of Islam,* as well as his seminal piece; *Milestones.*[41]

Many modern day radical Islamists and jihadists, noteworthy among them al-Zawahiri and al-Zarqawi, spent time in prisons of middle eastern nations, which often served as the crucible event that led to their complete and utter radicalization, as was the case with Qutb.[42] One excerpt from *Milestones* seems to reflect that radicalization in which Qutb posits the notion that man is not to have dominion over man, but that God alone is sovereign and God alone should rule on earth."

> *"The establishing of the dominion of God on earth, the abolishing of the dominion of man, the taking away of sovereignty from the usurper to revert it to God, and the bringing about of the enforcement of the Divine Law (Shari'a) and the abolition of manmade laws..."*[43]

Seeing the depravity of man, the violence in prison, the apparent failing of Egyptian society and its drift toward Western ideals and governance, Qutb comes to the conclusion that the Muslim Community of Believers has long sense been extinct. In the opening paragraphs of *Milestones* he posits that "the Muslim community has been extinct for a few centuries."[44] He goes on to say, "If Islam is to again play the role of the leader of mankind, then it is necessary that the Muslim community be restored to its original form."[45] Qutb astutely recognizes that the reestablishment of the Community of Believers and the envisioned Islamic awakening will be a

protracted effort. He states, "I am aware that between the attempt at revival and the attainment of leadership there is a great distance... the Muslim community has long ago vanished from existence and from observation, and the leadership of mankind has long since passed to other ideologies and other nations, other concepts and other systems."[46]

Qutb goes on to ask a vital question: "How is it possible to start the task of reviving Islam?"[47] He answers by asserting the world is in a "vast ocean of *jahiliyyah*". He evokes a rarely used Arab word to describe the ignorance of pre-Islamic society to describe the condition of Islamic society and man in general.[48] To attain this awakening he envisions the requirement for a vanguard that will arise and "that it must separate itself from the *jahili*" and recognize "the landmarks and milestones of the road toward this goal."[49] In fact, it is for this vanguard that Qutb states *Milestones* was written.[50] The ultimate goal is for the vanguard "to bring back the whole world to its Sustainer and free it from servitude to any other God."[51]

Qutb's radicalization was complete when he stated the vanguard "uses its physical power and *jihad* for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *jahili* system which prevents people from reforming their ideas and beliefs but forces them to obey their erroneous ways and make them serve human lords instead of the Almighty Lord."[52]

It is through these lenses in which Qutb views the world and why the message of *Milestones* wildly resonates with MRI groups as they, too, view Muslim governments as apostate regimes. They, too, view Muslim society as being in a general state of perpetual jahilyyia and that "a true Muslim had no choice but to overthrow it, no matter what means."[53] In fact, references to Qutb and *Milestones* can be found on just about every jihadist web site out there. So expanse is his influence, one can find copies of this work are in most Muslim book stores, corner markets, and magazine stands across the Muslim world.

Qutb's writings and ideology, perhaps more so than any of his predecessors, influenced militant radical Islam in ways he could only have hoped. Scholars Donohue and Esposito in their book *Islam in Transition: Second Edition* aptly identify Qutb as an "Islamic activist and godfather of modern revolutionary Islamic ideology."[54] Author Gilles Kepel in his book *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe* went further by describing *Milestones* as "the Islamic equivalent of Lenin's *What is to be Done?*"[55] Another scholar, Stephen Humphreys says that *Milestones* has become "the Bible of Islamic activism."[56] Ultimately, Qutb's ideology has been completely and totally embraced by radical Islam. *Milestones* has clearly become the revolutionary blueprint for defeating 'apostate' Muslim regimes as well as overcoming the West. In the end, Qutb was executed by the Nasser regime in 1966, making him a martyr, further elevating his stature among radical Islamist movements.

The Vanguard

The aforementioned Islamic luminaries represent but a few of the 20th century Islamist theorists who fervently articulated a vision of a purely Islamic state as the only acceptable form of governance for Muslims. Indeed, there are many adherents to Mawdudi's and Qutb's ideology who in their writings have propagated many of the same concepts of a vanguard, jihad, and jahiliyyah. One notable Qutb follower, Mohammed al-Faraj, a radical Islamist, who was executed for his role in Egypt's Anwar Sadat's assassination in 1981, wrote a small book entitled *The Neglected Duty* wherein he provided his thoughts on the reestablishment of the caliphate. He says war is the way the Caliphate will be established and in so doing each Muslim has an individual duty to do his or her part.[57] He states, "the establishment of an Islamic state and the reintroduction of the Caliphate were (not only) already predicted by the Apostle of God… for which every Muslim should exert every conceivable effort to execute… moreover the state

cannot be established without war, then war is an obligation as well... Muslims are agreed on the obligatory character of the establishment of the caliphate… to announce a caliphate must be based on the existence of a territorial nucleus from which it can grow."[58] So it's clear from these three ideologues, as well as other influential Islamic revivalist authors that the concept of a transnational global Islamic caliphate was ceded in the militant Islamist consciousness long before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Al Qaeda

Mawdudi and Qutb envisaged a vanguard of separated Muslim jihadists who would arise and take the fight to the enemy. Once the vanguard defeats the enemies of Islam, its leaders would have freedom of action, as well as control of the Muslim world enabling it to reestablish the historical caliphate.[59]

So what MRI organizations have the sufficient capacity and will to be the envisioned vanguard for a worldwide Islamic revolution? The most obvious transnational MRI group with the organizational structure and global reach is, of course, al Qaeda. Their demonstrated ability to plan and execute dramatic terrorist attacks far from their base of operations is unmatched. Al Qaeda is most certainly the best positioned MRI group with a substantial network of actors with tentacles that span the globe. The Institute for Defense Analyses wrote in a report on al Qaeda and associated movements (AQAM) that "al Qaeda and its theological brethren believe that, in order to realize a "restored" Caliphate, they must unify the *umma* under the banner of Salafi jihadism… central to that movement is the creation of a revolutionary vanguard marching at its head. Indeed, "networks" and "cells" are only structural aspects of the vanguard, which is itself the most ideologically evolved element of the movement…"[60]

In fact, al Qaeda leadership itself often uses the vivid images of an Islamic vanguard. A

top al Qaeda lieutenant, Sayf al-din al-Ansari said, "The Islamic movement is not a substitute for

the Islamic community; it is the vanguard that goes ahead of it."[61] Not surprisingly, the

statement below highlights just how large a monolithic view al Qaeda has of itself and its role as

the leader of the global Islamist movement.

> *"The world jihad movement today as represented by al Qaeda is a vanguard*
> *movement that has succeeded in carving out a place for itself in modern thought.*
> *As a movement, it has all the prerequisites for action. As a group, it is close to*
> *the community, cutting across borders and nationalities. It embodies the idea that*
> *there is no difference between Arab and non-Arab..."[62]*

Clearly, al Qaeda can claim military victories against the United States that few can,

which has served to strengthen its role in radical Islam as well as its reputation as the preeminent

Islamic revolutionary vanguard. However, al Qaeda's radical, utopian vision of the Caliphate is

largely an emotional appeal to return to the glorious days of the 'Rightly Guided Caliphs' that

isn't likely to happen. Perhaps more dangerous are al Qaeda's other goals which include forcing

US forces to withdraw from the Middle East, to dissuade the US from supporting Muslim states

such a Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, and to have strict Shari' a law in every Islamic

country.[63]   These seemingly more realistic goals should be noted here as not to leave an

impression that al Qaeda is singularly focused on the Caliphate; as they are clearly not.

Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun (The Muslim Brotherhood)

The Muslim Brotherhood is the oldest, largest, and most influential of the transnational

MRI groups with chapters in many countries with millions of members that represent a sizeable

threat, if ever mobilized as part a Muslim vanguard under the banner of jihad. However, while

the Muslim Brotherhood has a violent history of terrorist attacks it's also important to note that,

unlike al Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood openly operates in many countries. It's transformation

through recent years has seen the Muslim Brotherhood exercise political dexterity by establishing political parties in most Middle East nations with the intent of achieving its goals through political action, rather than through violence.[64] This distinguishes them from most of today's MRI groups in that they seek alternative means to achieve their goals, and this often puts them under scrutiny and criticism of the most radical of the Islamists such as al Qaeda. So much so that al Qaeda's al Zawahiri has commented that they are "luring thousands of young Muslim men into lines for election… instead of into the lines of jihad."[65] Leiken and Brooke in their research have concluded that the Muslim Brotherhood's extensive influence and moves toward moderation "presents a notable opportunity" for Western policymakers.[66] Of all the transnational MRI groups vying for power and influence in the Muslim world, the Muslim Brotherhood represents a group the West could work with to achieve mutual interests such as "opposition to al Qaeda, the encouragement of democracy, and resistance to expanding Iranian influence."[67]

In recent years, the Muslim Brotherhood has shifted its focus to social and political action to achieve the political change they seek. In fact, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood Executive Bureau, Ghozlan, affirmed their peaceful agenda when he said, "The Muslim Brotherhood's message is simply social and political reform without resorting to any sort of violence or terrorism to change the status quo."[68] The Muslim Brotherhood also seeks to distinguish itself from al Qaeda by denouncing terrorism by embracing social and political action. In a recent statement Dr. Mohamed Habib, the first deputy chairman of the Muslim Brotherhood, said, "The crystal clear difference between the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and that of Al-Qaeda network… the Muslim Brotherhood rejects completely the methods and actions by the al-Qaeda network and completely denounces violence and terrorism, and staunchly supports peaceful change and reform."[69]

Despite the aforementioned statements, the Muslim Brotherhood bears watching. While on one hand the Brotherhood advocates peaceful social and political action on its web sites, it still openly supports HAMAS, whose ultimate goal is the destruction of Israel. Case in point is the following quote from a Muslim Brotherhood leader in reaction to the recent Israeli response to the rocket attacks on its country in January 2009. Muslim Brotherhood General Guide, Muhammad Mahdi 'Akef, "called on Muslims everywhere to wage Jihad against Israel in support of Hamas."[70] Such statements and the repeated tendency to leverage the call for jihad bring into question their peaceful intentions in achieving their goals and objectives.

Other Transnational MRI Groups

The aforementioned Muslim Brotherhood and al Qaeda represent the better known and more influential transnational MRI groups which have global reach, but there are others who represent substantial threats to the West and their interests. Groups such as the Jihad Group in Egypt, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas in Palestine, the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria, Jemaah Islamiyah (or JI) in Indonesia and Malaysia, Abu Sayyaf Group, Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon are but a few MRI groups which could contribute forces to the Islamic vanguard. Many of these groups, however, are typically locally or regionally oriented with their own goals and objectives. For instance Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines is a separatist movement, while Hamas (founded from the Muslim Brotherhood) and Islamic Jihad are more of a revolutionary movement with the stated objective of destroying Israel. Despite their regional orientation, many of these groups have sent fighters to al Qaeda training camps and have received funding for operations. Not unexpectedly, these MRI groups' ideologies remain closely aligned with those of al Qaeda and, as such, they represent a global danger as part of the Islamic vanguard.[71]

Summary

The modern Islamic revivalist movement of the 20th century was sparked by a few fundamental ideologues who observed Islam as a religion in decline, which moved them to action. The writings of these men formed the basis of the radical Islamic ideology that launched today's radical Islamist movement. They denounced what they often label as "apostate Muslim regimes," they decried Western democracy and the perceived negative influences on their society, and ultimately they sought the reestablishment of the transnational global Sunni Caliphate. Driven by the desire to see Islam returned to its preeminence on the world stage, these Muslim luminaries reinvigorated the concept of the Community of Believers. In doing so they sought to minimize the nation-state construct and instead sought to identify with the entire Muslim diaspora as a single body that must be governed by an Islamic Caliph and ruled by Shari'a law.

To achieve this vision, Qutb and Mawdudi wrote of an "Islamic vanguard" that must separate itself from the locus and carry jihad to the enemies of Islam, no matter where they may be. Today, one could look at AQAM as the most likely group with at least some demonstrated will and capacity to be the vanguard. They, no doubt, have embraced this notion when a top al Qaeda lieutenant, Sayf al-din al-Ansari said, "The Islamic movement is not a substitute for the Islamic community; it is the vanguard that goes ahead of it."[72] Other MRI groups around the world also represent a sizeable force, if ever mobilized under the Islamic vanguard banner. Yet one has to question any vanguard's real ability to achieve such a lofty goal of establishing a worldwide Islamic Caliphate with a vanguard that operates in the shadows and can only fight in asymmetric methods. To truly achieve victory one must eventually face and defeat the fielded forces of your opponent. Yet, these MRI groups represent serious threats to security and stability

in many nations and, as such, the West and legitimate Muslim nation-states must find ways to counter these groups' ideologies despite the unlikely event they will ever achieve even some success.

Notes

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[3].Ibid. p. 211.

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[7] John L. Esposito, "The *Oxford History of Islam*", (Oxford Press), p. 549-51.

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[15] http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/135.pdf, Article: Investigative Project on Terrorism Project on Terrorism (accessed on 16 Feb, 2009), p.1.

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[22] Ibid, p. 103.

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[24] Ibid.

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[50] Ibid, p. 36.

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[52] Ibid, p. 36.

[53] [53] Stephen R. Humphrey's, *"Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age",* (University of California Press) p. 194.

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[57] Stout, Huckabey, Schindler, & Lacey, *"The Terrorist Perspectives Project: Strategic and Operational Views of Al Qaida and Associated Movements,"* (Naval Institute Press), p.14-15.

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Chapter 4

US Counter-Caliphate Strategies

"(T)he war on terror is, in grim reality, a prolonged, worldwide irregular campaign -- a struggle between the forces of violent extremism and those of moderation...but over the long term, the United States cannot kill or capture its way to victory...kinetic operations should be subordinated to measures aimed at promoting better governance, economic programs that spur development, and efforts to address the grievances among the discontented, from whom the terrorists recruit. It will take the patient accumulation of quiet successes over a long time to discredit and defeat extremist movements and their ideologies."[1]

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates

Since becoming the Secretary of Defense in 2006, Mr. Gates has frequently highlighted the need for the U.S. military establishment to shift from kinetic solutions to less obtrusive methods to win the war on terror.[2] No where is this more important than in developing a comprehensive US strategy to defeat the transnational global threat posed by today's MRI groups. The threat we are facing, and the enemy's vision of a global Caliphate with a vanguard to lead them, requires us to rethink how we organize our efforts to counter our enemy's strategy. Indeed, Michael Vickers, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations Low intensity Conflict stated, "The principle GWOT battleground will occur in states with which the US is not at war, and the principal fight will be an indirect and low visibility/clandestine one from a US perspective. This poses a number of challenges for the effective integration of all instruments of national and international power."[3]

It's clear that the transnational MRI threat will not dissipate anytime soon, thus it's clear we will be fighting 'the forces of extremism' for the foreseeable future. In such a protracted

effort, these transnational enemies seek to engage the US and our allies through insurgent campaigns in many parts of the world. They seek areas where they can occupy ungoverned or under-governed spaces to train and plan as well as to recruit from Muslim populations to enlarge the vanguard. From these spaces they will launch operations that threaten states at risk.

Clearly, the US cannot defeat these transnational or even regional MRI groups with military means alone without making many more enemies in the process. Instead, a strategy to counter this transnational threat will require a "whole of government approach" as well as integrated efforts with allies and states at risk that require and seek our support. The 2008 National Defense Strategy states, "The struggle against violent extremists will not end with a single battle or campaign. Rather, we will defeat them through the patient accumulation of quiet successes and the orchestration of all elements of national and international power."[4]

Strategy

To apply an effective strategy to defeat this transnational threat the US must employ all the elements of its national power (military, intelligence, diplomatic, law enforcement, information, financial, and economic) in an appropriate and fully synchronized manner. [5] One element of the US strategy to counter the global caliphate movement is one in which we assist allies and partner nations by helping them build military capacity and capable security forces so they can confront and defeat MRI insurgents on their turf and with as little US military presence as possible. This legitimizes and strengthens the state at risk in that it proves it has the ability to provide security for its populace and that it has the capacity to take on and defeat its enemies.

Any successful strategy requires the careful application of intelligence, financial assistance, diplomatic cooperation, good governance programs, and law enforcement tools synchronized with partner nations' agencies and its representatives. While all of these must be

addressed and integrated in a larger plan, this author will limit recommendations to two critical

areas crucial to countering the MRI groups' objective of establishing a transnational global

Caliphate.

From that perspective, the information domain and the practice of good governance for

states at risk are most critical. MRI groups have proven themselves expert in the information

domain by utilizing Islam as their political platform, thus appealing to many radical Muslims

around the world. One constant message that must be countered is the idea that everything

wrong in the Muslim world is the fault of the United States and that America is the enemy of

Islam. Their carefully crafted message targeted at bringing young Muslims to the jihad has

provided them with a seemingly endless supply of soldiers for the vanguard. They've also

proven adept at finding and occupying ungoverned and under-governed spaces to set up small

Islamic enclaves from where they implement Shari'a law, train the vanguard, and launch

operations.[6]

Information Domain

Perhaps the most critical strategic component of any counter-Caliphate strategy is the

information domain. It seems many times that the enemy and al Qaeda, in particular, win the

war of ideas. MRI groups' adeptly utilize multiple media sources to transmit their radical

message. They expertly shape their message to target both Muslims and the West using mass

media to its advantage by airing its agenda on al Jazerra, other Arab news agencies and, most

importantly, hundreds of Muslim web sites on the internet. This has not gone unrecognized by

the United States. In fact, the 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism zeroes in on this

core component of a successful strategy by stating that, "In the long run, winning the War on

Terror means winning the battle of ideas… the battle of ideas help define the strategic intent of our… strategy."[7]

Understanding how crucial the information domain is, the new Obama administration seems to be crafting a Muslim-friendly message which, if carefully implemented, could serve to counter the information strategy of our enemy. In his inaugural address the President signaled that he is ready to engage the Muslim world on new terms when he said, "We seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual trust."[8] Then, less than a week later, the President shocked the world as one of his first television interviews was given to the Saudi TV station al-Arabiya. In this interview the President said, "My job is to communicate to the Muslim world that the United States is not your enemy."[9] Not necessarily a new message, but one that seemed believable from a new President with a recognizable Muslim name who himself lived in a Muslim nation as a child.

Surely these carefully crafted messages are designed to signal both a change in the tone and tenor of the message coming from the United States. This outreach is clearly targeted at the larger Muslim world in an effort to counter the radical Islamist message that "America is the enemy" as well as to find ways to work with Muslims in addressing the many difficult challenges facing the Muslim world today. This apparent course change in the US strategic communications message is crucial to winning in the information domain and must be sustained, augmented, and nested in the broader implementation of US policy.

Strengthen Governance

According to the US government, al Qaeda and other radical Islamist groups' geopolitical agenda include the establishment of a "single, pan-Islamic, totalitarian regime that stretches from Spain to Southeast Asia."[10] To do this, these Islamists will seek to occupy and gain sanctuary in

nations where there are areas of ungoverned or under-governed spaces to establish small enclaves where central government control is limited.[11] Here they can establish a shadow Islamic government that could take shape as a future Caliphate government and eventually extend their span of control and further limit the influence of the state's central government.[12] In so doing they occupy territory and they control the population, essentially becoming the de facto government. If such a strategy takes form and these enclaves become linked, there is potential for a larger expansion of a regional Caliphate.

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan as well as the numerous Island archipelagos in Southeast Asia come to mind as examples of areas where MRI groups have formed such enclaves. In such areas MRI groups can operate, recruit, train, and implement small Islamic governments far from the reach of the central government. From these ungoverned spaces they can expand their authority over the populace and implement Islamic law and governance. They also gain freedom of action and movement to train for and launch operations against other regional states at risk.

To counter what appears to be a strategy of establishing local Islamic enclaves as insurgent outposts in ungoverned or under-governed spaces, the US must strengthen the threatened governments reach and governance through a variety of means. Critical to all of this is to understand that any US strategy or objectives will be suspect in these predominantly Muslim nations. As such, any US influence and action will often require an indirect approach using host nation security forces and a "whole of government" approach to implement a strategy to counter their efforts. A small military footprint along with other elements of national power must be used in quiet and discrete ways.

Key recommendations for strengthening host nation and regional partners as they develop plans to address local and regional insurgencies established in these ungoverned spaces are as follows:

- Host nation leadership is critical to success and must be engaged.
- There must be the realization that the population is the "decisive terrain" to counter the insurgency.
- The host nation must develop, implement and execute a clearly defined counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy.
- The population determines the winner based on perceived legitimacy and capacity to deliver on promises.
- The populace must be prepared to support their government's strategy and actions. An information campaign is crucial.
- US personalities and relationships matter with both the host nation government and the interagency.
- Less US presence is often best.

With all that in mind it's critical for the host nation to take responsibility for and to lead their COIN strategy and operations. Over-reliance on US support does not solve the problem. In fact, a large US force presence in a state at risk with a large Muslim populace will no doubt be controversial and likely be counter-productive for the state at risk. Some limited, yet self-contained use of Special Operations Forces (SOF) to advise and assist in a "by, with, and through" method is a likely US force construct that could provide a small footprint and could be leveraged to train host nation military and security forces.

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)-Philippines is an example of just such a campaign where operations over a sustained period of time against the Abu Sayyaf terror group (ASG) bore tremendous success. This on-going operation, which began is January 2002, has built a legacy of trust between the populace, their military, and the central government. Competent Philippine Armed Forces, backed by a small US special operations force, actively engage the Islamic insurgents while at the same time securing the population from being exploited by the enemy. While the US is actively engaged in the Philippines, it's the host nation military and a

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legitimate government that now has the Islamists on the run, which has earned them the trust of the populace.[13]

Summary

OEF-Philippines is just one example of a successful counterinsurgency strategy that was used to achieve success against an Islamic insurgency. The operation utilized all the elements of national power of both the host nation and our own. Further, the host nation forces, not the US, conducted the combat operations and were out front in their effort to defeat the Islamic insurgency in their nation. This example can be retrofitted and employed in many states at risk and may well be the recipe for victory in this "long war."

The Philippines operation is now a seven year counterinsurgency campaign that has helped secure Basilan and Jolo Islands which, prior to this campaign, were enemy sanctuaries and places where the central government and its security forces dared not go. The precise application of information operations and the strengthening of the local and central governments by the US served to deny the ASG freedom of movement and significantly attenuated their numbers. This type of quiet success is, perhaps, exactly what Secretary Gates meant when he stated, "It will take the patient accumulation of quiet successes over a long time to discredit and defeat extremist movements and their ideologies."

Notes

[1] Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age*," Foreign Affairs* *88, no. 1 (January/February 2009): 2, in http://www.ciaonet.org/journals/ fa/v88i1/03.html (accessed 10 Mar 2009).*

[2] Ibid.

[3] Michael Vickers, "Implementing Gwot Strategy: Overcoming Interagency Problems," Congressional record (15 Mar 2006): 4, in http://armedservices.house.gov/comdocs/schedules/3-15-06VickersTestimony.pdf (accessed 10 Mar 2009).

[4] National Security Defense Strategy, June 2008, p. 9.

[5] An appropriate plan should be: Feasible – it must be able to accomplish the mission within the available time, space, and resources; Acceptable - the operational advantage gained by executing the plan must justify the cost in resources; Suitable - the plan must accomplish the mission; and Complete – it should outline (a) the decisive operation accomplishes the mission, (b) shaping operations that create and preserve conditions for success of the decisive operation; and (c) sustaining operations that enable shaping and decisive operations. See U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Planning and Orders Production,* FM 5-0*,* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, January 2005), chapter 3, 29-30.

[6] Jarret M. Brachman & William F. McCants, CTC Report: Stealing Al-Qaida's Playbook, Feb 2006, p. 19.

[7] 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, p. 7.

[8] Obama Inaugural Address, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/20/us/politics/20text-obama.html?_r=1&pagewanted=2, (accessed on 1 April 2009).

[9] President Obama's comments from al Arabya interview, http://lynch.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/01/27/obama_on_al_arabiya, (accessed 1 April 2009).

[10] 2006 National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, p. 5.

[11] Jarret M. Brachman & William F. McCants, CTC Report: Stealing Al-Qaida's Playbook, Feb 2006, p. 19.

[12] Ibid.

[13] This reference is first hand knowledge and experience during Operation Enduring Freedom-Philippines from Jan-Sept 2003 as the author commanded Special Tactics forces deployed in support of this effort.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

"Not many people in the world, either in Islamic countries, or Christian ones, or Hindu, or anything else, really want to live a life of extreme Puritanism, endless hate, and suicidal wars. Extremist leaders can take power, and for a time, be backed by much of their population hoping to redress past grievances and trying to find a new utopia. But as with the most extreme Christian warriors during the European wars of religion, or with the Nazis, or the most committed communist revolutionaries, it eventually turned out that few of their people were willing to go all the way...if that meant permanent violence, suffering and death. So it will be with Islamic extremism."[1]

-Daniel Chiro,PhD, University of Washington

Militant radical Islamist groups seek to defeat the United States, Israel, and legitimate Muslim regimes which don't share their view of political Islam. They follow a radical ideology borne out of the perceived negative state of Islam in the Middle East in the 20th century. They continue to blame democracy, capitalism, modernity, and the move toward secular governments in Muslim lands as the root cause for Islam's perceived decline. They posit that a return to the ways of the "Rightly Guided Caliph's" as the cure for the ills that plague Muslim society today. Their stated goal of reestablishing a transnational global Sunni Caliphate will remain their objective for the foreseeable future. They will continue to postulate that the United States is the enemy of Islam and the problems Muslims face are due to America's policy and actions in the Middle East and elsewhere. They will continue to try to delegitimize governments of predominantly Muslim nations by referring to them as "apostate regimes" and highlighting their cooperation with the United States and the rest of the free world. Ultimately, they seek a utopian vision where Islam dominates the world and everyone is subject to their radical version of Islam. To achieve this vision, they will continue to conduct their campaign of terror against

both the West and Muslim nation-states. These MRI groups, al Qaeda in particular, will utilize an emerging strategy of establishing a global Islamic insurgency to reestablish the historic Caliphate. They will operate in ungoverned and under-governed spaces to establish small enclaves in states at risk in areas that are out of reach of the central government's authority. Examples of this include the FATA in Pakistan, Afghanistan (prior to 9-11 and, in some instances, still today), and the Southeastern Asian Archipelagos.

Despite their grand vision of reestablishing a global transnational Sunni Caliphate, it will most likely fail. As indicated from the 2007 Wilton Park conference in Jakarta, the final conclusion was that "the vast majority of people do not seriously entertain the notion of bringing back the Caliphate… this seems true across the spectrum of Islamic voices… rather, it seems to be primarily extremist groups that are advocating for the re-establishment of the Caliphate."[2] They went on to state that "history will not repeat itself: it is not possible to bring back a system that existed for just a few decades 15 centuries ago."[3] Instead, it's viewed that they are using the cultural Muslim symbol of the historic Islamic Caliphate as a means to rally young Muslims to their cause. In fact, many at the Jakarta conference believed "the notion of bringing back the Caliphate is a rhetorical device used to recruit, gain sympathy, mobilize followers, irk enemies, and to gain legitimacy."[4] Using the glorious past as a grand vision for the future is, instead more of a recruiting slogan and stands little chance of ever becoming a reality for the MRI groups. The return of the Caliphate is truly a utopian vision that has little chance for success.

Nonetheless, the US must not sit back and presume this will fail, but must engage with a strategy to counter this radical vision. This strategy must be one in which the "whole of government" is engaged. The US must employ all the elements of its national power (military, intelligence, diplomatic, law enforcement, information, financial, and economic) in an appropriate and fully synchronized manner.

Critical to success is for the US to reshape its message that Muslims are not the enemy of the US and that the problems in the Middle East and in the Muslim world writ large, are not entirely the result of US actions and policies alone. The steps taken by the President to address this in both his inaugural address and in his TV interview is a good step forward. But, the information domain still appears tipped in the enemy's favor, particularly in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The US must stay on the offensive by finding ways to directly appeal to Muslims as well as shaping policy which is less threatening. We must use 'soft' power rather than military force wherever possible. The second aspect is to strengthen states at risk by helping them counter MRI insurgencies and activities wherever they may exist. The predominately Muslim populations in these nations are the dominant terrain which must be won over. The human terrain piece is absolutely the key to success. The 'whole of government' approach is the strategy whereby we leverage everything from economic aid, to law enforcement assistance, and intelligence, as well as others in order to achieve those "quiet successes" that will ultimately lead us to long term victory.

Notes

[1] Daniel Chirot (PDF). *Why Some Wars Become Genocidal and Others Don't*. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington. http://www.uwtv.org/programs/displayevent.aspx?rID=1922&fID=497, (accessed 2 April 2009)

[2] Julia Voelker McQuaid reporting on Jakarata Caliphate conference observed, http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/documents/conferences/WP886/pdfs/WP886.pdf (accessed on 3 April 2009), p. 5.

[3] Ibid,, p. 5.

[4] Ibid, p. 20.

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